DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 729 FL 020 909

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TITLE "The Proper Way To Pray"; Description of a Korean-American Youth Service Prayer.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 18p.; For serial issue from which this paper is analyzed, see FL 020 904.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Working Papers in Educational Linguistics; v8 n2 p89-105 Fall 1992

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *Behavior Standards; *Churches; *Clergy; *Discourse Analysis; *Korean Americans; *Religious Education
IDENTIFIERS *Prayer

ABSTRACT

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ED354729

"The proper way to pray"[1]
Description of a Korean-American youth service prayer

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A youth pastor's prayer was analyzed using techniques of microanalysis to reveal sociocompetencies required of Korean American teenagers in a youth church service. It was found that the markers of context within a service included changes in discourse, prosody, posture and body movements. The teenagers, who with the youth pastor responded to and created the context, strove to maintain "proper" prayer behavior even with the intrusion of a cat.

Introduction

> Children and adults, in order to know whatever they need to know in order to operate in a manner acceptable to others in society (Goodenough,1957) need to know what forms of verbal and nonverbal behavior are appropriate in what social contexts (Erickson & Shultz, 1981:147).

In all contexts there is a proper way to behave, known to the participants through gradual socialization processes, and often revealed to the observer when the rules are broken. Through microanalysis of interaction in a stylized segment of behavior, we can see that an attempt to identify sociocompetencies in a learning environment should include not only the verbal cues but also the non-verbal. This study looks at the discourse, prosody, and body movements that occurred in a prayer in a Korean-American youth church service and attempts to identify some of the sociocompetencies required of the youths and the youth pastor in a highly stylized setting.

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Markers of Context

According to Erickson and Shultz, knowing how to act in a situation requires recognizing the situation for what it is. In this case, a prayer is distinguished by different behavior from the sermon which precedes it and the offering and singing which followed after it.

> The production of appropriate social behavior from moment to moment requires knowing what context one is in and when contexts change as well as knowing what behavior is considered appropriate in each of those contexts. We think that the capacity for monitoring contexts must be an essential feature of social competence: the capacity to assess when a context is as well as what it is (1981:147).

The task of the microethnographer is to describe that context and the behaviors that shape and maintain the context. The ideas of Goffman (1981), Pike (1967), and Erickson (1981; 1982; 1986) were used in this study to analyze the markers of change in context, the ways that the participants maintain the activity, or interact with others.

Markers of a new segment are called "a change in footing" by Goffman (1981:128) and "a new segment" by Pike (1967:74). The elements defining them are the same, including changes in posture; audience; pitch, volume, rhythm, stress, and tonal quality; and language (code-switching). Any of these could be present while a "change of gears" (Goffman 1981:126) takes place.

The idea of "footing" brings to bear several important questions concerning the complexity in the notions of speaker and listener. When describing a language situation, there is the possibility of having more than one type of speaker and listener. Hymes delineates two possible types of speakers. One is the originator of the message–the speaker or sender; the second is the one who gives or delivers the message (1974:56). There is also the possibility of having more than one type of listener. First is the hearer, or receiver, or audience; and second is the addressee. Having two categories of possible speakers and listeners basically allows for the "middle man."

Goffman also delineates the complexities involved in the notion of speaker-hearer. "Audiences" can differ in their proximity to the speaker in numbers compared with the speaker(s), and in whether or not what was said was intended for them to hear (ratified or not, intentional or not). The term "speaker" must also allow for more than one person talking with another. The speaker is not always the originator of the words, as in a play, or often in a president's speech.

The teenagers in a Korean-American youth church service recognize changes in footing and know how to behave during the different segments of the service. They are expected and allowed certain verbal and non-verbal behavior before the service begins. These differ from those expected and allowed while the service is in progress. In a detailed description of one segment of the service, the observer would see that their behavior changed with the context, and the context changed with their behavior; the rules that govern their behavior sustained the activity even with an interruption. The segment under analysis is a prayer by the youth pastor immediately following his sermon. The intrusion of a cat during the prayer made the event different from any other prayer either on that day or any other time. How the teenagers and the youth pastor maintained the routine speech event of prayer during this potential interruption is the subject of this paper.

Study

A Korean-American youth church service was videotaped and then analyzed using the techniques of videorecording and microanalysis suggested by Erickson (1981; 1982; 1986). The youth pastor agreed to allow his service to be videotaped so that I could analyze interaction in the church setting. The recorder was set up before the service began and was left running without an operator throughout the service until most of the people had left the room. Positioned in the doorway, it faced the teenagers and caught a profile of the youth pastor.

After delineating the major segments of the service, I chose to focus on a prayer because it is a highly stylized part of all the services (youth or adult) that occur in this church. The the words of the youth pastor and the major body movements of all the teenagers (and the cat) during the prayer and surrounding seconds were transcribed and then put to musical notation to give an idea of the rhythm sustained or broken during the prayer (Appendix B: Micro Chart).

The church service took place on a Sunday afternoon in mid-March from 2:30 to 3:30. The teenagers met as usual in a basement room in the church simultaneously with the adult church service held in the main sanctuary upstairs. There was one window in the room and one door. The teenagers sat in three rows of chairs which faced a desk that had been pushed back to the wall and a blackboard. In addition, there was a music stand, which was used for a podium by the youth pastor. On the day of the recording, there were two girls absent who usually sat in the front row. In their absence, four boys sat in the front row (Appendix A: Figure 1), and all the girls sat

behind them: five in the second row, two in the third row. Since no one operated the camera, there were a total of twelve people in the room: including eleven teenagers and the youth pastor.

The teenagers are Korean-American between the ages of 12 and 18, who have been in the U.S. for varying lengths of time; some were born in Korea, others in the U.S. They are all bilingual in Korean and English, except for a brother and a sister who do not understand or speak Korean well enough to carry on a conversation in Korean or to understand a sermon in that language. This may be the reason that the youth pastor led the service in English, including prayers, sermon, and announcements. The only time Korean was used as part of the service (apart from the teenagers talking among themselves) was in the second verse of a song.

During the prayer that followed the sermon, a black cat came into the room. Since the door and window were shut, it was a complete surprise (and for a while a mystery) that the cat got in. Although some of the teenagers had seen this cat outside the church building, they had never seen it inside. The cat roamed around the room from the time of the prayer until the end of the service.

Segments of the service

The youth church service consists of several parts or segments which can be viewed etically, or emically. When I watched the video, I noticed fourteen parts. However, when I asked the youth pastor to list the parts of a church service he only listed twelve (Table 1).

Table 1: Parts of the Youth Service

Researcher	Youth Pastor
singing	singing
prayer	prayer
singing	singing
reading scripture	reading scripture
singing	singing
prayer by a teenager	prayer by a teenager
singing	singing
prayer	
sermon	sermon
prayer	
offering with singing	singing
prayer	offering with singing
announcements	announcements
prayer	prayer

The list by the youth pastor differs from mine in that I put the prayer before and after the sermon as separate parts of the service. I had decided to focus my attention on the prayer that followed the sermon, so I was surprised to find that the youth pastor did not mention the prayer. I asked him if he prayed after his sermon, and he answered, "yes." I asked him if the prayer was considered part of his sermon, and he replied:

> Yeah, I pray before and after my sermon; depends on how I feel. Sometimes it's appropriate to pray; sometimes I don't have to pray. I mean I try to get away from this one after another thing constantly, so even with those things [order of service] I switch.

Since there was a discrepancy in the segmentation, I asked two teenagers (who were participants in the video) to list from memory the parts of a youth church service. They said, "sing, pray, read the Bible, sing pray, sermon, sing during offering, pray, announcements, and pray." [2] They also did not distinguish the prayer that follows the sermon as a separate part of the service (Table 2).

Table 2: Parts of the Youth Service According to Teenagers

Researcher	Youth Pastor	Teenagers
singing	singing	singing
prayer	prayer	prayer
singing	singing	
reading scripture	reading scripture	reading scripture
singing	singing	singing
prayer by a teenager	prayer by a teenager	prayer
singing	singing	
prayer		
sermon	sermon	sermon
prayer		
offering with singing	singing	offering with singing
prayer	offering with singing	prayer
announcements	announcements	announcements
prayer	prayer	prayer

Discussion

A microanalysis of the prayer within the context of what preceded and followed it indicated that there was a connection with and a contrast to the sermon conclusion. The connection and the contrast were marked in discourse, posture and body movements, and prosody.

The prayer followed the conclusion of the sermon (Figure 1). The youth pastor finished his sermon on "Why do bad things happen to good people?" with a rhetorical question, "Is there no answer for this, does God not care?". Then he mentioned that he would pick up on this topic in the sermon the following week.

Figure 1: Sermon Conclusion

Is there no answer for this[3]
does God not care
ahm
just hold that thought
I'm gonna take off on that next week
and I'm
of course I'm gonna say
yes God does care
and you'll see
that God loves you more than anything else
at this point sounds ridiculous
but you'll see
that God is above all these
that God cares for us
above more than anybody else
and that all these kind of distressing events
ev
despite all these
you'll see that God loves you
let's pray

"Let's pray" marked the switch from sermon to prayer. The postural shifts that occurred immediately after "let's pray" indicate that the prayer was a new segment requiring different behavior on the part of the speaker and the listeners. At the same time, however, the prayer was part of the sermon. Following (Figure 2) is a transcript of the prayer which will be referred to throughout the rest of the paper.

In some ways the prayer can be seen as a continuation of the sermon. The fact that the youth pastor and the teenagers did not mention the sermon final prayer as a separate part of the service suggests that they considered that prayer a part of the sermon, sometimes included and other times not.

In addition, the youth pastor's words in concluding the sermon are mirrored in the prayer. Table 3 compares some of the phrases in the sermon conclusion with the words in the prayer. The youth pastor repeated the content as well as the words. His main point in the sermon conclusion was that God is in control, and although we may

be confused now, we will be able to see in the future that God loves us. This was also the main idea of the prayer.

Figure 2: The Prayer

Let's pray
dear lord
thank you for loving us
despite all these terrible things
I guess what's so
what's even more great about you is that
even through these
we can see your love
sounds ridiculous I know
and lot of us here probably think that way
and yet help us to trust you
and help us to wait
a little longer
to see your providence
to see your working out
and help us
to see that
even though things look bad at this point
even things look
bad at this point
pray that you would help us to realize that uh
you're in control
in Jesus name
amen

Table 3: Comparison of Sermon and Prayer

Sermon	Prayer
at this point sounds ridiculous	sounds ridiculous I know
and that all these kind of distressing events	to see that even though things look bad at this point
ev ("even")	even things look bad at this point
despite all these	
you'll see	we can see your love
that God loves you more than anything else	
despite all these	despite all these terrible things

However, in volume, posture, and body movements, the participants "do" the prayer differently than they "do" the sermon. In contrast with the actual discourse, the changes of gears mark a new segment (Erickson & Shultz, 1981; Pike, 1967). The youth pastor said, "let's pray," and there was a long pause. His next statement, "dear Lord," was much lower in volume. As Heath notes in her discussion of prayer in the Roadville community, it is as if this "public" prayer is not meant to be heard (1983:217). The volume was so low that it was difficult to hear the words to make a transcription.

Another strong indicator of the transition from sermon to prayer was posture. Immediately after the youth pastor said, "Let's pray," the teenagers shifted from the general posture of heads up and eyes looking ahead, to heads bowed with eyes closed. The youth pastor changed his position as well. He moved his hands from the stand and clasped them behind his back. The boy in the front row (Appendix A: Figure 2, B-2) made the most dramatic change in synchrony with the youth pastor. The youth pastor's hands went behind his back between the time when he said, "Let's pray", and, "dear lord". At the same moment, the boy lowered his hand from his face to his knees and bent his head down to his knees. Within the same tenth of a second, the youth pastor's hands clasped and boy 2's head bowed to its lowest point (Appendix B: Micro Chart, Seconds 47-48). The teenagers and the youth pastor more or less maintained their positions throughout the prayer (depending on their interaction with the cat, the youth pastor's prosody and pauses, and the movements of others). Just as posture indicates the beginning and end of the prayer, staying in posture (or coming back to the posture before the end) indicates a shared knowledge of the rules of behavior for praying. Eyes should be closed, head bent forward, and hands together below the head. There are rules of behavior unique to this segment. The teenagers showed their sociocompetency by complying with them, even when a cat walked in.

A black cat entered and strolled among the teenagers eighteen seconds after the youth pastor had begun the prayer. At first only one girl (G-2) showed that she had noticed the cat. She looked up from her prayer position, smiled, and watched the cat as it walked between the legs of a boy (B-4) and past the boys in the front row. (I couldn't see if B-4 reacted, since he was partly hidden from the camera). As the cat passed the three boys in the front row, they did not look up; it seemed that they hadn't noticed it. However, when it passed back in front of them one at a time, they looked up and at the cat. One boy (B-2) showed his surprise overtly by pulling back his head quickly when he saw the cat. He continued to look around, first behind him at the girl (G-2) (who had first seen the cat and laughed quietly), then behind his other shoulder

at the window. His head went back to his hands immediately before the youth pastor said, "amen."

The youth pastor's words during the prayer as well as the major body movements of the teenagers fell into a rhythm which was sustained except for a pause when the boys were moving around, which temporarily broke the rhythm. This is shown in the musical notation on the microchart. The rhythm was found by placing the beat on the accented syllables and the major body motions. I found that the youth pastor's accented syllables, as well as when he came in again after a pause, often fell on a beat simultaneous with major body movements of the teenagers. This synchrony is an indicator of listener-speaker collaboration.

In addition to the timed synchrony, it is evident that the youth pastor was aware of his listeners' extra movement. He didn't see the cat until after the prayer. During the time the boys in the front row were looking at the cat, the youth pastor stumbled in his prayer, repeating his words (bold-faced segments) which he hasn't done before in this prayer, falling out of rhythm, and pausing noticeably. He was seemingly distracted by the boys, not by the cat.

and help us
to see that
even though things look bad at this point
even things look
bad at this point
pray that you would help us to realize that uh
you're in control
in Jesus name
amen

He got back into the rhythm, however, by the time he said, "You're in control," before ending the prayer.

Between the sermon and the prayer, there was also a change in speaker and audience. In the prayer, we need to ask who the youth pastor was talking to. Who was his primary audience: God? the teenagers? the video equipment? or someone who may be listening standing outside in the hall? This is a relevant question, because one of the markers of a change in footing is a change in speaker and audience. For example, before the prayer, the youth pastor used the pronouns "I" to refer to himself and "you" to refer to the teenagers. During the prayer, he switched to "we" and "us" to refer to himself and the teenagers, and to "you" when referring to God. The teenagers,

as well as the youth pastor were included as speakers. The prayer was from all of them.

Even though the primary audience was no longer the teenagers, the youth pastor still interacted with the teenagers during the prayer. He showed his awareness of their movements just as their movements showed their awareness of his pauses. As Erickson writes, "To talk is to listen–to attend, by watching and hearing, to what the audience is doing from moment to moment" (1986:315). And here, though the participants had their eyes closed in an effort to shut out the others in the room and focused on their intended audience (God) the speaker still attended to what the teenagers were doing.

In the youth service prayer, the interaction was not between two interlocutors but between a speaker and an audience. The teenagers were more like a group of people listening to a lecture, or a music concert. In prayers before and after the sermon, and in the sermon itself, the role of the youth pastor was orator; the role of the audience was to appreciate remarks made, not to reply in any direct way. They were to conjure up what a reply might be but not utter it. As Goffman writes, "And when talk comes from the podium, what does the hearing is an audience, not a set of fellow conversationalists....Indeed, and fundamentally, the role of the audience is to appreciate remarks made, not to reply in any direct way" (1981:137-138).

Conclusion

The activity of prayer was sustained through continuous rhythm, body posture and motion despite entrance of the cat. The teenagers, by their posture and movements, showed that the prayer is uninterruptible; though it is disturbed, it is not broken. The fact that a boy on the front row (Appendix A, Figure 1, B-3) reached out to pet the cat but drew his hand back in to the other hand (Appendix B: Micro Chart, Seconds 43-47), and the fact that all the teenagers resumed "prayer position" before the word "amen" are evidences of a norm. When the order broke down with the intrusion of the cat and the teenagers did repair, we (observers) got an insight into what the order is.

Learning in any context involves sociocompetencies. This research showed that the sociocompetencies required of children in an instructional setting (such as in a church service) depend on not only the verbal but also the nonverbal. Words are only a contextual part of an event. As Erickson and Shultz point out, redundancy of cues

that something new is happening (that the prayer is beginning) allows for everyone to get the message–to perform correctly (1981:150).

What is required to perform competently in a group activity can be identified through microanalysis. Research that attempts to describe sociocompetencies required or performed by children in any setting needs to include as many avenues of behavior as possible–verbal, posture, gaze, rhythm, etc. An adequate description of a speech event would be incomplete if it does not account for the redundancy of cues.

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[1] Title is from a poem learned in childhood. Author unknown.

[2] When the youth pastor looked at this list, he said, "these aren't wrong, sometimes I do it that way."

[3] The lines of transcription mark a breath utterance, with pauses of varying lengths following each line.

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Appendix A

Figure 1

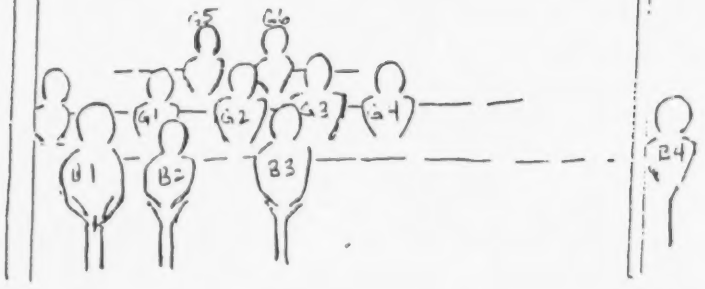
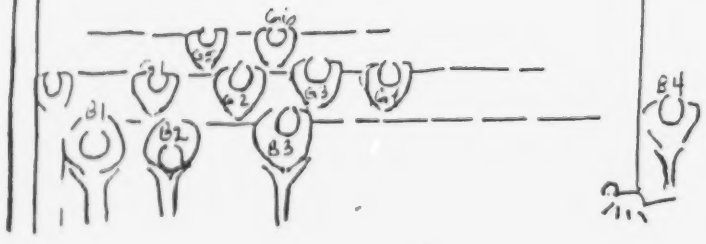


Figure 2

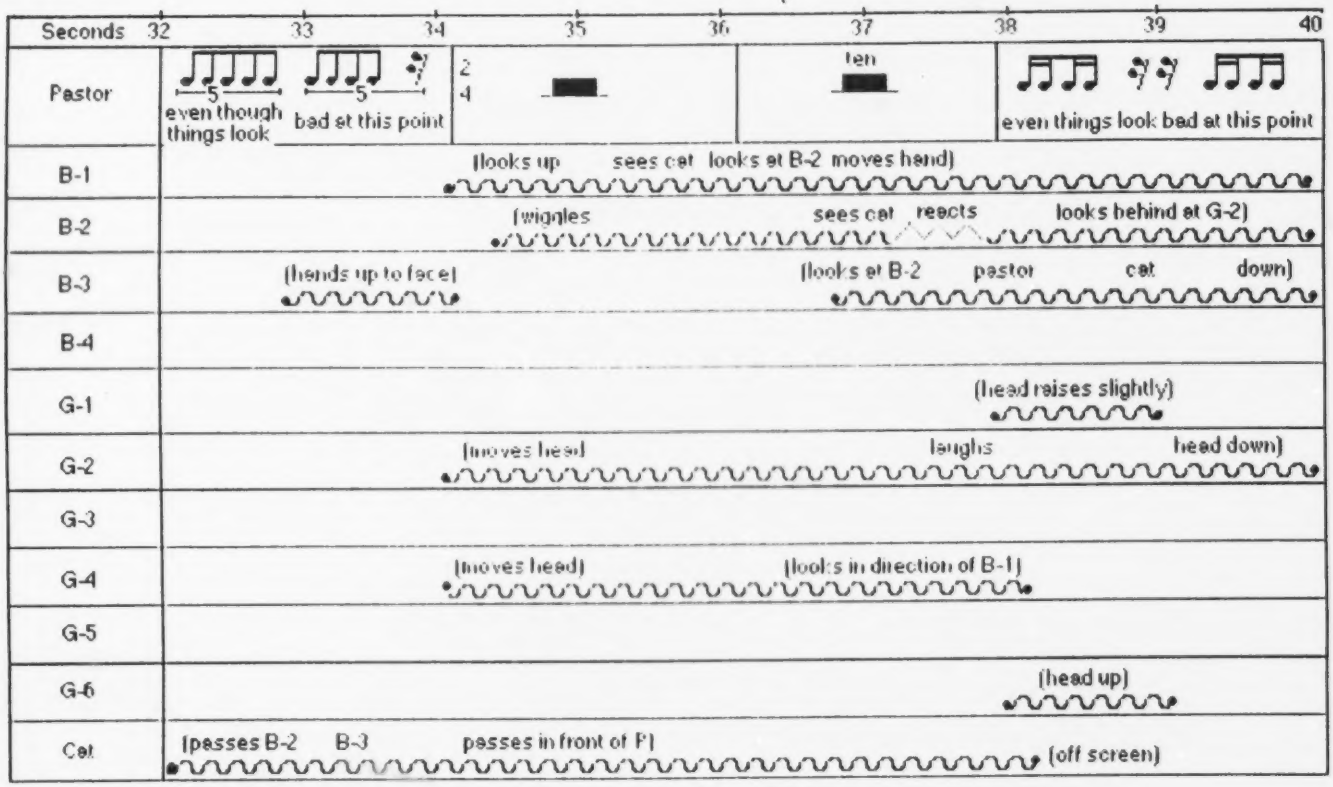


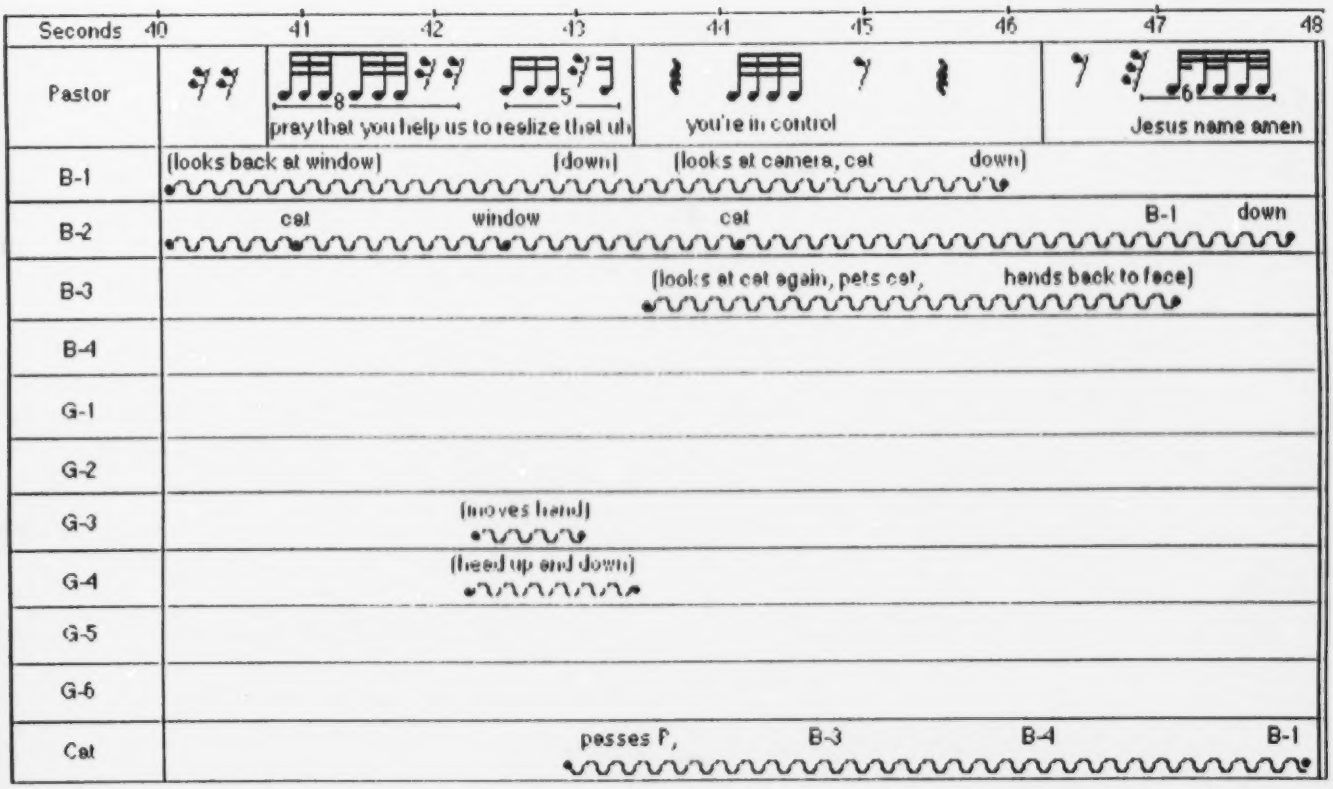
Seconds	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07
Pastor	Thank you for loving us		in spite all these		terrible things		I guess whats so	whats so great about
B-1	(hand to face to knee)							
B-2								
B-3								
B-4								
G-1								
G-2								(head up)
G-3							(head up)	
G-4							(head down)	
G-5								
G-6								
Cat								

Seconds	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Pastor	you is that		even though these		we can see your love		sounds ridiculous I know		lot of us here
B-1									
B-2									
B-3		(hands)							
B-4							(raises hand slightly)		
G-1									
G-2	(hand to face)							(sees cat)	
G-3									
G-4									
G-5									
G-6									
Cat							(enters screen passes B-4)		

Seconds	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Pastor		prob-ly think that way			end yet help us to trust you		end help us to wait	a little longer	
B-1									
B-2									
B-3									
B-4									
G-1									
G-2	(watches cat as it goes in front of B-4, B-3, B-2 and B-1								
G-3									
G-4									
G-5									
G-6									(head up and down)
Cat							(passes B-4) (passes B-3)		(passes B-2)

Seconds	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
Pastor		to see your providence		to see your working out		end help us to see that		3/4	
B-1									
B-2									(wiggles)
B-3									
B-4									
G-1									
G-2									
G-3									
G-4									
G-5									
G-6									
Cat	(passes B-1)		(off screen)						





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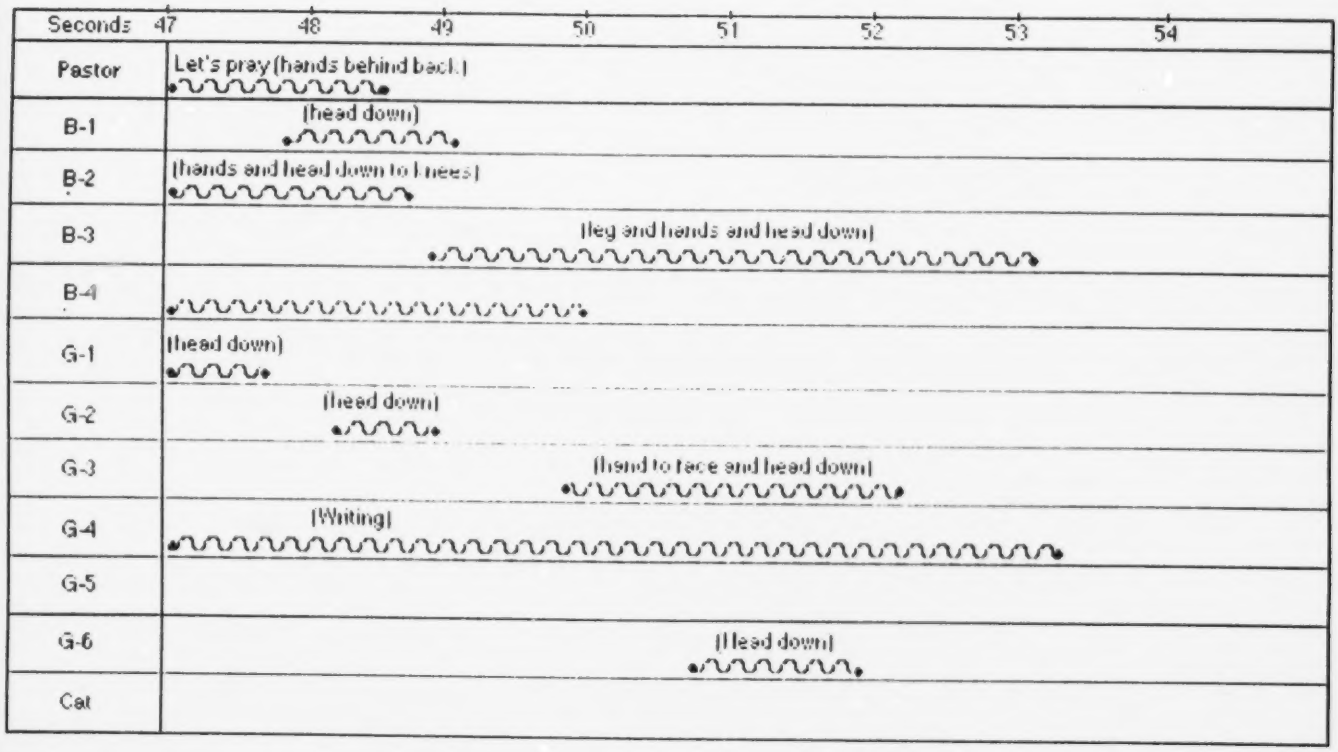
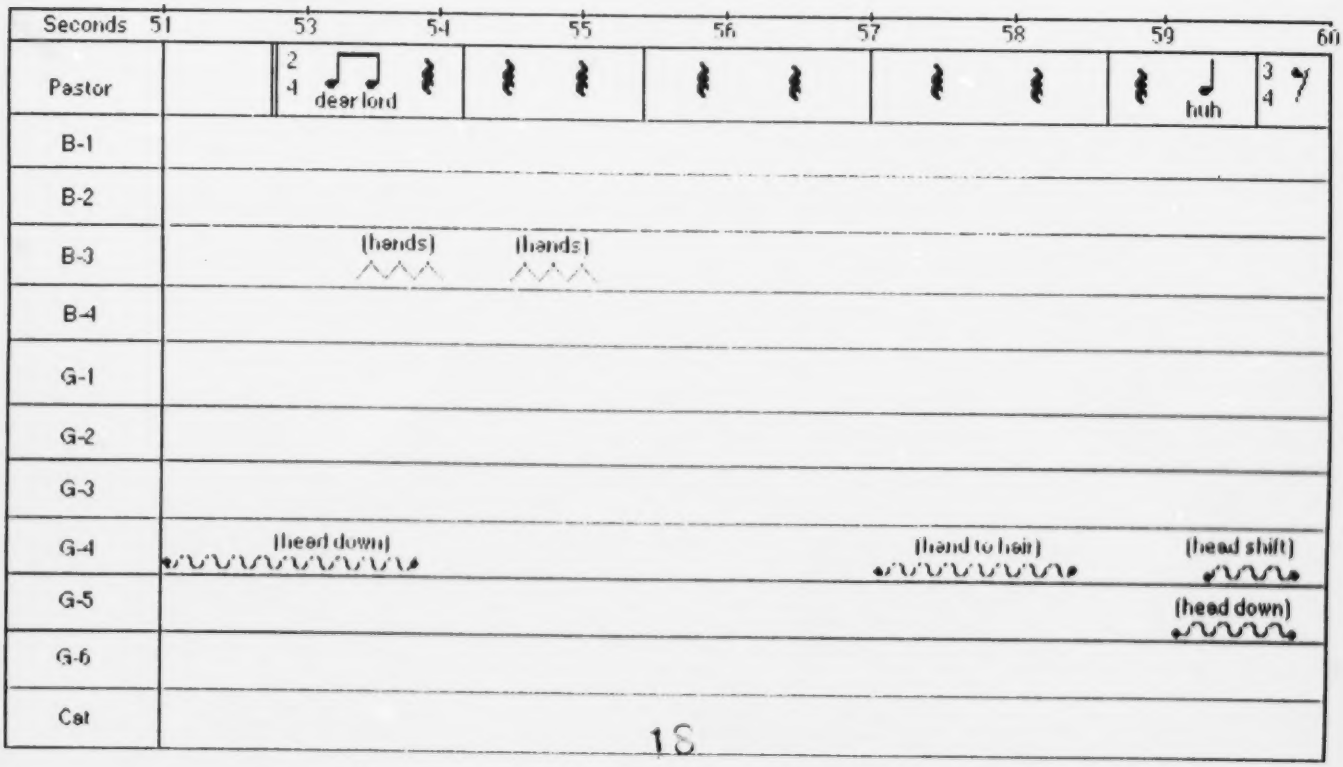

Seconds 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54
Pastor
Let's pray (hands behind back.)
B-1
(head down)
B-2
(hands and head down to knees)
B-3
(leg and hands and head down)
B-4
G-1
(head down)
G-2
(head down)
G-3
(hand to face and head down)
G-4
(Writing)
G-5
G-6
(Head down)
Cat


Seconds 51 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60
Pastor
2/4
dear lord
huh
3/4
B-1
B-2
B-3
(hands)
(hands)
B-4
G-1
G-2
G-3
G-4
(head down)
(hand to hair)
(head shift)
G-5
(head down)
G-6
Cat

18